



Scensus



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Chapter 1 by Linden Grigg

I walked down the gangplank. A new planet. My knees wobbled and I thought for a second that I might have to sit down. I took a few more steps, but couldn't do it. I sat. My heart was reverberating around my helmet and beating in my ears, and sweat was running down my face and dripping into my spacesuit. I reached up, my palms clammy in the dusty white gloves, and found the catch. I fumbled with it for some minutes, and I could feel frustration welling up inside me. "Typical," I thought, "the first person on this planet and I'm making myself out to be totally inept." I finally sorted it out after what seemed like an hour, and with relief removed the fish-bowl-like object from my head. I looked around me, and I gasped.

Chapter 2 by Pharaoh



Everything was different. The world was alight with colour. Plants covered every inch of the ground in bright greens, blues and purples. My feet landed on the ground as I jumped off the metal gangplank. Sounds filled my ears. Melodic sounds from an animal who looked like god knows what. Sucking in a big breath of air I felt relieved. I'd finally made it. The air was clean; unpolluted unlike Earth's toxic air.

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Little did I know, something was lurking in the shadows.

Chapter 3 by -



"Come on down Tah--" I was interrupted as a heavily scaled creature pounced on my back. I struggled with this beast for what seemed an eternity, when suddenly a gun shot went off and the animal tumbled to the ground.

I fell on my back and lay there gasping for breath as blood trickled down my neck.

Tahlia knelt down beside me and began washing off the thick red. "What was that?" I faintly asked her, as blood slowly drained out of my body.

"Don't talk, you need to use what ever strength you have left to make it back onto the ship." Tahlia propped me up. She was soaked with my blood.

Then, I heard another rustle...

Chapter 4 by Sub-Reality



A tall, thin organism appeared behind us. Tahlia quickly postured up, pointing her blaster at it.

"Hold it there, buddy!"

The creature nonchalantly advanced towards us, disregarding Tahlia's warning.

"I said stop!"

The alien paid us no mind. I could see Tahlia's finger touch the trigger. Just before Tahlia was about to issue another, and probably her final, warning, the creature knelt down near the lifeless body of the scaled beast, examining the charred hole put through it by Tahlia's blaster. It's body language portrayed some kind of sadness in his realization of the animal's fate.

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The creature, now standing a foot away from the blaster, lifted his arm and gently brushed it aside. We both watched in amazement as he slowly stooped down, placing his cold, elongated hand on the wound on my neck, covering it completely. The being began to chant something under his breath as his hand glowed dimly. I felt a warm sensation as the pain melted away. He lifted his hand, the wound completely gone, as if I hadn't been wounded at all. It was incredible.

He got up and began to walk away.

"Wait!" I said, picking myself up.

As the creature reached the treeline, he turned and motioned for us to follow him.

Chapter 5 by ArchAngel



We followed, brushing aside tendrils and huge purple leaves, stepping into the thick heady smell of the foliage. After ten minutes we came into a clearing, and in the center stood an alien village of twisting fluted columns.

More of the tall thin aliens were here and as they turned to watch us, I saw their aardvark heads had long flickering tongues, but no ears. Their tawny bodies were covered in fur.

The being we had followed began chanting softly again, and two glowing stripes appeared down the back of his head. The other aliens stood still and silent, the back of their heads began to glow too. I could feel my scalp prickle, and words formed inside my head. *"...we are one purpose, one world, one mind. We evolve, separate, but we are still one. We see the patterns overlaid before us. What you think is small consequence is calamitous change, is damage to the whole, unravels all."* An image of the heavily scaled creature appeared in my mind, laying where it had fallen.

"You need to understand", I said, "We were only defending ourselves."

"Be as it may, we must replace, or great damage and sorrow lie before us."

It was then that Tahila cried out and I spun round. Two of the tall thin creatures were holding her arms. Her blaster lay at her feet.

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Chapter 5 by ArchAngel



She could have stopped them, if she had been a man. Instead of fighting, tears streamed down her face and she began to sob. She kicked the weapon away.

"Stop oppressing me!" she yelled out. Her PTSD was kicking in now, a remnant of one time when she was bullied online.

Chapter 7 by Kadife



Tahlia fell to her knees, tears streaming down her face. I pulled out my blaster and aimed at the aardvark head who had led us here.

"Let her go or I shoot!" I said, the gun shaking in my hands. I'd never killed a living thing before. The organism began to speak in my head.

"You do not understand. We must replace those who are forced to leave us."

"No, you're the ones who don't understand. She is my friend and partner. You can't kill her!" I yelled, trying to steady my shaking hands.

The aardvark head looked at me and simply repeated, *"You do not understand. We must replace those who are forced to leave us."*

Tahlia just kneeled there, incapable of doing anything except crying. The alien looked over at some others, dressed in silvery blue furs and nodded. One of them stepped inside one of the huts and emerged with a rock, hollowed out to form a bowl. Inside, was a iridescent liquid.

The alien who had led us there, I was going call him Stripes, lifted Tahlia's tear-stained face, opened her mouth and tipped the bowl towards it. I saw the drink fall into her mouth.

"NO!" I screamed and shot my blaster. Through my rage, I hadn't been able to aim, so the laser beam sizzled as it hit rock, then the rock disintegrated.

The aliens payed me no attention. The two aliens who held Tahlia suddenly let her go and she fell to the floor.

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"What did you do to her?" I screamed. I wanted to see him punished again.

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"We must replace those who are forced to leave us," Stripes said simply. Then, a horrific image came to my mind and I gasped, watching my fear come to life.

Tahlia was changing. Her arms, legs, and body thickened. Her mouth and nose elongated into a snout, A tail started to grow and her whole body started growing scales. In less than a minute, Tahlia was an exact replica of the strange crocodile-like beast she'd killed.

"We must replace those who are forced to leave us," said Stripes again. He took a rope from one of the aliens dressed in blue furs and looped it around Tahlia's neck. More aliens tied Tahlia down.

"Leave now. Tell your leaders to leave our planet alone," said Stripes. Then his stripes stopped glowing and motioned for me to go.

"But, what about-" I started to ask, but he answered me before I could finish.

"She is ours now. She has been served justice for killing an innocent creature," he said and several aliens led Tahlia away. She clawed the ground and tried to follow me, but the ropes held tight and she was dragged away.

I turned away, tears streaming down my cheeks. I would come back for Tahlia, but I stood no chance now. Stripes followed me away, but when he saw that I had boarded the spaceship, he turned away and disappeared into the jungle.

I turned on the engine and started on my way back to Earth. During my journey, I made a promise to both me and Tahlia.

"Tahlia, I promise, I'll bring you back. I swear on my life," I whispered as I piloted the ship onto the landing pad.

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